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ABSTRACT

This guide offers information and supporting materials to educators wishing to establish a high school equivalency program, drawn from experience with the External Diploma Program of Boston's (Massachusetts) Chinese American Civic Association. The program focuses on developing the reading and writing skills of non-English-speaking immigrants. An introductory section describes the equivalency program. A second section discusses the role of three writing types (dialogue journals, creative writing, and essay writing) in developing writing skills. The three subsequent sections describe specific classroom procedures for each of these writing task types, and include worksheets, anecdotal information about class activities, some student writing samples, and other supporting materials. The sixth section discusses two reading strategies, prediction and vocabulary development. Section seven elaborates on the use of newspapers for classroom reading exercises. This is followed by a section discussing potential topic areas for class discussion and writing assignments. A set of class rules and a 17-item bibliography are appended. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Bridging the Gap

Transitioning Second Language Learners into Adult Basic Education

A Curriculum Guide

From The Boston Public Schools External Diploma Program

Administered by:

The Chinese American Civic Association

Boston, Massachusetts

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Written by:

C. Ann Shoufler

Spring 1992

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader:

In January of 1991 The Chinese American Civic Association in Boston received funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education to start an External Diploma Program. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the External Diploma Program (E.D.P.), it is a high school diploma program.

"Oh! Like the GED!" This is the response that I usually get when I tell people that I teach in the "E.D.P." The answer to this question is an unequivocal "NO!" The GED is a certificate program whereas the E.D.P. is a diploma program. When a person takes the GED, they are given a battery of tests and then a certificate that says that they passed that battery of tests. By the time a person finishes the E.D.P., they will have taken three diagnostic tests (which essentially are supposed to be like passing the eighth grade) and will have completed five life skills oriented tasks. Instead of receiving a certificate, students who complete the E.D.P. (at least in Boston) are given an actual high school diploma. Unlike the GED, the E.D.P. is geared specifically for adults who have been out of the school system for a number of years and have a lot of life experience to bring to a diploma program. In Boston, it is administered through the Boston Public Schools and the sites are channeled through different community based organizations, The Chinese American Civic Association being one such site.

At The Chinese American Civic Association (C.A.C.A.), students in the E.D.P. will complete two classes before they actually receive their high school diploma. On the first level, students concentrate on their reading and writing skills and somewhat on reviewing their math skills in preparation for passing the three diagnostic tests (reading, writing and math) that I mentioned above. Those three tests need to be passed in order to enter the second tier of the Program which consists of five tasks (Community Resources, Consumer Awareness, Occupation and Career

Awareness, Health and Government and Society). After completing the five tasks students receive a diploma.

It is worth noting here that, when C.A.C.A. began as a host site for the E.D.P, we were faced with many difficult challenges. First of all, C.A.C.A. had never had an adult diploma program, GED, E.D.P. or otherwise, so we had no clear model about how to administer such a program. Secondly, we needed to develop a curriculum to teach to the standards set forth by the Boston Public Schools (very stringent standards, I might add) but we also had to find ways to adapt this material to working with linguistic minorities. The E.D.P. was set up with the native English speaker in mind; someone with a lot of life experience in the United States.

The student population we serve at C.A.C.A. is primarily Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants. As a relevant sidenote, (at least I hope it's relevant because I couldn't figure out where else to add this section!) as I was developing this guide and asking friends, family, etc. to review it for me, I was often asked about the logistics of the class. To clarify that point, the cycles of the E.D.P. run at 23 week intervals. Students meet 4 mornings a week for 2 hours each time. They are also expected to complete at least 2 hours of homework every night. Many people find the homework part an unusual request for an adult class, (including, at first, our students!), but it is necessary for students to do some work outside of class if they expect to accomplish their goal of receiving a high school diploma within a reasonable time frame. Also, students are expected to do a lot of independent study and research and by beginning with the premise that outside work will be expected we eliminate some of the problems that would arise if students were just expected at the halfway point in the E.D.P. (i.e. when the enter the second level) to begin doing outside work. This approach really makes our E.D.P. much more cohesive from start to finish. I hope this clears up any confusion that any reader might have about how we do things at our agency!

Back to my other point; I really believe that the E.D.P. is not only a good way for an immigrant to gain solid reading and writing skills but also to learn about their adopted society. However, there is a lot more work both on the part of the teacher and the students in addressing the problems faced in choosing this particular avenue for getting the high school diploma. There is a whole body of knowledge that an American native takes for granted, a very practical body of knowledge that an immigrant has to develop in conjunctions with bolstering their English skills: using the telephone, conducting a job search, knowing about the U.S. system of government, to name a few.

Many of these issues are dealt with by the teacher in the second level of the E.D.P. (currently this teacher is Sara Freed) but on the first level, which I teach, we try to bring in some of these skills, especially critical thinking skills, into the class as an integrated part of developing reading and writing skills. The main thrust of this curriculum guide concentrates on developing reading and writing skills and how I addressed those areas with my class. One section of this book, which I have called Topic Areas outlines some of what I have done to try to get at the things students feel they need to know in order to complete their tasks. Very luckily, students have always included some of their main concerns about the tasks in letting me know what they would like to learn. Their concerns almost inevitably match at least part of what they will need to know in order to complete their tasks.

I received a grant from SABES to write this guide in the hopes that it would encourage other people who are either thinking about starting an E.D.P. or who already have started one and are looking for ideas on how to conduct their program. While this book was written from the vantage point of what I did with my students in the E.D.P., I really believe and hope, that this guide can serve a more far reaching audience. As immigrants students begin to have a longer stay in programs across the city, it is necessary to find ways to transition them from the structures in the E.S.L. classroom to what often occurs in ABE classrooms.

I do not pretend to have all the answers. Certainly after teaching in this program for over a year I am just beginning to get an idea about what sparks students' interests to learn and what has been tabled as unsuccessful. However, all of this is still in process (I hope it always is, for there is always more that can be done in any program to fine tune it; it's more exciting that way!). The approaches and the subject matter that I have used have worked with my particular group of students so far.

I cannot set forth this curriculum guide with any amount of singular credit. The E.D.P. Program at C.A.C.A. consists of a team of people who have all worked very hard in the last year to get this program off the ground and move it in a successful direction. Annie Chin has worked as a coordinator, King Lee has worked as a counselor, I have taught on the first level of this program and Sara Freed has taught on the second level. We have all worked together to develop this program and every day it becomes more and more solid.

In January, C.A.C.A. graduated its first E.D.P. class. We had eight students complete this program in the first year. It felt really great to see them cross the stage and receive their diplomas. They certainly worked hard and deserve every amount of praise (as well as Sara who put in all those hours helping students with their issues!). At the end of May, we will graduate our second class and the first class that I have worked with from start to finish. I feel really proud of them. This has been no cake walk for any of us, but we really have built something and it's great to be a part of it. I hope that this guide offers you some helpful advice that can be integrated into your own programs, whether they be E.D.P. or other types of ABE classes. It really offers a lot to everyone involved.

Good Reading and Good Luck!

Sincerely,

Ann

Ann Shoufler

INTRODUCTION TO WRITING

Of all the skills that students need to master to be successful at completing the E.D.P., I feel like writing is the most important. Of course, students need writing skills at the beginning level to complete the Writing Diagnostic Test but writing serves so many other areas as well. Much of what is needed to complete the Tasks is very clear and very strong writing. Writing and sharing writing also foster better reading skills. Writing builds confidence in that if students begin to look more closely at what their own thoughts and feeling are through the different writing processes, then they can begin to see how much they already know and how much they have to offer in terms of ideas. Writing is a great avenue of expression and if a teacher pays close attention to what students are saying, she can begin to see more clearly what student issues actually are and bring them back to class in the form of materials, discussion, etc. The list goes on and on. Is it yet readily apparent that I feel that writing is important?

In my E.D.P. classroom, I would classify writing into three different areas: Dialogue Journals, Creative Writing and Essay Writing. Each of these areas functions to develop a different area of writing but are also very integrated to form writing in a very holistic manner. Students need to have a very clear idea about the logistics of essay writing (i.e. writing an introduction with a clearly defined thesis, body paragraphs and a conclusion) in order to effectively complete both the Writing Diagnostic Test and also to more efficiently complete the sorts of writing demands that they face when they complete the Tasks part of the E.D.P. We spend a lot of time in class developing those skills but not only in a formulaic manner. I do what I can to encourage students to look at their own writing and the writing of other students in this process. Indeed we try to approach writing as a process of self discovery that has many steps, including peer evaluation.

While approached as separate activities, Dialogue Journals and Creative Writing assist in strengthening a student's writing. Creative Writing takes students away from the more dry logistics of writing. If students can begin

to add their imagination to an essay they have written then it will ultimately have more flair, be more interesting to read and most importantly come from the heart and soul instead of just the head to pen connection. Dialogue Journals also serve to help students have a looser more comfortable grip on their pens. If you will, it is a structured form of free writing where sharing ideas takes precedence over the mechanics of writing with the hopes that it will begin to let students focus on the expression of their ideas more freely in their other forms of writing.

The writing teacher Brenda Ueland worked under the premise that "Everybody is talented, original and has something important to say." I try to conduct my classes under the same philosophy. So far, so good. As you will see from the writing examples included in this guide, my students have tapped into their own spirits and found beautiful and eloquent voices with which to express themselves. I feel eternally grateful to have been a part of that experience and hope that if you choose to use some of these methods that you will feel the same way.

Dialogue Journals

The group of students I have had for the last year were very resistant to the writing process so I decided to approach it slowly. I did not jump right into the writing process but rather decided to begin by having them write a summary of their week for consecutive Fridays for the first month of classes. On the first Friday, I asked them to answer the question, "What did you do in class during the last week that you felt was important to you?" In asking that I received feedback not only on the writing process but also on what they felt was important during the week (informal assessment). The second week I asked them what they had done outside of class during the week. For the first two weeks I allowed them 10-15 minutes before the end of class to write. The third week I asked them simply, "What have you done in the last week?" In this way they could write about class or something outside of class. I asked this question for two Fridays in a row and allowed students 20 to 30 minutes to write. As a response to each of these writings, I answered each student's writing in paragraph form. I had explained to the students that the weekly summary would not be corrected for grammar, spelling or punctuation.

Finally after a month of writing these summaries, I wrote the students an open ended letter. I would not use the same letter for every class but the letters that I would write to a class would include some of the same elements. These include:

1. **An explanation of what a dialogue journal is;**

2. **A personal experience from my own life (my feeling is that if we expect students to write in an open, honest and meaningful way we have to be willing to do the same thing; if you are not willing to talk about your own life and experiences, do not expect your students to); and**

3. **Some sort of open-ended question to get the dialogue rolling.**

At the end of this section, I have included an example that shows this process. I have included a sample letter which I wrote to my students and have also included a copy of each of the forms I used initially with the students for the free-writing exercises that lead to the journal writing.

When I presented this material in class for the first time, I allowed the whole two hour class period. I wanted to allow plenty of time for students to understand the process, to understand the words of my letter. As I approached this, I tried to do several things. First of all, I tried to lay out a very clear and explicit explanation of my vision of a dialogue journal so that students would understand what was expected of them. Secondly, I tried to include something rea nd genuine and timely from my own life so that my students would see t I was more than willing to participate in the process. I wrote this letter n a single draft, not going back to make any corrections so that I could hopefully present the materials in a less formal writing style as a model of sorts. Lastly, I tried to include some sort of departure point for the students as a way that I hoped would relate my situation to their own lives.

I read the letter to them, slowly and carefully and then I allowed time for them to ask questions. When we all felt like we understood each other then I allowed them to begin writing. I handed each of them a black and white composition book and reiterated, as I had tried to do in my letter, that the black and white composition book would only be used for dialogue journal writing (one side note to this approach is that the books are relatively small and can usually be filled with the students' writing and my responses as well, which, in my opinion, is a concrete way for students to see what they have accomplished in writing - it is finishing a difficult task and being able to see how far you have come).

I received some incredible responses to my letter. Unfortunately, in the spirit of respecting my students privacy as I promised from the beginning of this dialogue process, I cannot include any of their letters. I will, however, say that this process was incredible. It accomplished so many objectives. It helped my students to be less self conscious of their writing by allowing them an avenue to explore their written ideas without having to worry about the mechanics of writing. I must admit that this group was very wary of writing without their dictionaries and grammar rules at first. In the beginning, I sometimes received only a half a page of a very carefully laid out response but after time to loosen up their pencils and their minds this group of students began to write incredible pieces. After time I began to look forward to reading and responding to their dialogue journals more than anything else that we did in class.

This served another purpose as well. I was able to develop a more personal relationship with each of my students through this process. I feel like it helped us develop a bond that helped the writing process. We were all able to reveal, at our own pace, the things that were important to us. We became a stronger class through this process.

Even though I felt like this was one of the more successful things I did with my class, there is one area in which I felt like I was not able to achieve. At some point I would like to see a transition from my students writing back and forth with only me to having them shift to writing to each other. I have yet to figure out how to make that transition smoothly but give me time!

Sample Dialogue Journal

27 January, 1992

Dear Friend:

I am writing you this letter to begin the process of dialogue journal writing. A dialogue journal is when I write you a letter and then you write back to me and then I write back to you and so on and so on. When you finish reading this letter you will write back to me in the black and white composition book that I have given you. This book will only be used for dialogue journals. Dialogue journals are for in class writing. You will not take these books home with you and you will not be assigned dialogue journals as homework. You will be given class time to write every two weeks or so.

We use dialogue journals as a place to share and explore our thoughts, feelings and ideas. It is not a place to worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation or all those other formal, mechanical pieces that go along with writing (don't worry, we will have plenty of time and space to explore those pieces as well!). No one will see these journals except the two of us so feel free to write about whatever you want.

When I let my thoughts and feelings come to the surface, I find the Gulf War to be the most pressing thing on my mind. I always thought that I was a person who would always protest against war like the people protested and marched during the Civil Rights Movement that we have been studying. Now that I see people out there protesting this recent war, I don't somehow seem to be able to make myself participate. You see, my favorite cousin is a medic in the army and I feel that if I protest than I am saying that I don't support him and his decision to stand up for his country in the way that he thinks is best.

Last Saturday there were many people on the Boston Commons protesting the American presence in the Gulf. They thought that all military personnel should return to the United States immediately. There was this side of me that wanted to join in their quest for peace. "Nothing should be worked out at through the shedding of blood," I thought.

Instead, I just stood on the sidelines, the careful observer of the scene, torn between my own sense of patriotism and my desire to respect my cousin. It made me think about how all of you must have felt during the Tiananmen Square situation, wanting to take a stand but fearing that stand at the same time. If you were in my shoes, what would you do? I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Your teacher,
Ann

Name:_____

Date:_____

What did you do in class this week that you felt was important to you? Write for 10 minutes.

Name:_____

Date:_____

What did you do outside of class this week that felt important to you? Write for 10-15 minutes.

Name:_____

Date:_____

Write a summary of your week. Write for 15 minutes.

Creative Writing

In the spirit of creative writing, I have set up this section in somewhat of a stream of consciousness style and like dear old Proust who coined the term, I am remembering loosely the ranting of the spirit which eventually lead to my "creative writing" curriculum. I feel this example follows the theory of using creative writing in the classroom: it should be used as spontaneously as possible and as a way to enhance the other, more formal, forms of writing that are required of students trying to complete the E.D.P. I used creative writing in my class in conjunction with process writing as a way of fine-tuning and expanding upon the process writing.

Towards the beginning of my first cycle I had students write down as many words as they could think of to describe themselves. They handed the words in to me and I took them home and typed a page for each student's description of themselves. The next day I brought them in and set each page in the middle of our classroom table. Students then had time to read the pages and try to guess which student belonged to which page. I didn't carry this any further, but it was a good icebreaker activity.

A week later I brought in a list of sentence starters:

I love...
I feel...
I fear...
I would like to see...
I would like to be...
I believe in...
I think...
I like...
I dislike...
I would like to meet...
I would like to...
I would like to change...
My greatest achievement is...
I will someday...
I have always wanted to...

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I wish...
If I could I would ...

When they finished that activity I asked for volunteers to share what they had written for certain of the sentence starters. This is a good activity for opening up the pen to mind and heart connection to allow the creativity that exists in all of us to begin flowing.

I also used creative writing as a trouble shooter. By that I mean that if I saw a significant number of students were having trouble with a particular area of writing, I would use creative writing as a different approach to addressing that particular difficulty. More specifically, at one point my students were having trouble moving from general to specific examples in their writing. I felt like that lack of specifics was a hindrance to their writing.

I wanted them to focus on detail, so one day when they came to class I had them take a walk through Chinatown, the community where our E.D.P. Classes are held, and focus on discovering Chinatown with their senses (I would not suggest doing this activity in the winter as students are bound to mutiny against your instructions of sending them back into the dreaded cold weather!). The result was great! Instead of telling them to focus on detail, we processed that focus. I think the doing was better than any example I could have given them.

After we completed our walk we discussed our findings. I divided the blackboard into several sections, one for each of the questions and then asked for a student volunteer to act as a recorder, making a list on the board of the various findings that people had from their walks. From that information I asked each student to write a note to a friend who is not familiar with Chinatown, describing Chinatown to them.

Below is a copy of the worksheet that I used and a copy of how one student, Jenny Cheung, responded to this exercise. I think Jenny's writing speaks for itself and I also believe that this turned out to be the most successful creative writing activity that I conducted in class. Not only did the students focus on detail in this exercise but by doing this activity in a creative sense, I think students became more aware of focusing on detail in subsequent pieces.

Chinatown Walk

Take a walk through Chinatown for 20 minutes. Notice Chinatown with your senses. Make notes in the provided spaces.

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What do you smell?

How do you feel as you walk through Chinatown?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write any other impressions you are having here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Chinatown

Jenny Cheung

Chinatown is a Chinese community. Many Chinese people live there for convenience. When I first came to Chinatown I felt very strange. But now everything is familiar for me because I walk through Chinatown to go to work and to school every day.

The things which I often see in Chinatown are still not changed. Every morning when you walk on the streets you will see the Chinese men habitually holding the coffee cup in front of the coffee shop. Some of them have no jobs and are waiting for somebody, anybody to hire them. They look melancholy because they worry that they won't find anything.

When you smell the fragrance of fruit, I can tell you are walking toward the supermarket. The workers put the fresh fruits in the fruit basket beside the supermarket. They are used to attract the crowd to do the business with those ripe fruits. That would be one part of the beginning of the morning. The Chinese women would like to have a chat when they meet their acquaintances in Chinatown. Most of them are Tai Sanese who speak their local language which I don't understand. Others are Cantonese and Vietnamese.

Chinatown will be crowded and busy when it's Saturday or Sunday. The delicious food is well know in the Boston Chinatown and many Chinese people and Americans come to eat. Through the bright window of the bakery, you can see an American woman buying the dim sum for breakfast and you can guess what she says: "I want this and I want that."

The junk in the street causes a bad smell in Chinatown and I hate it all because it affects the people who come. As I pass the Chinese cinema, I would like to have a look at the movie scene. They all come from Hong Kong. To go to see the films is one kind of entertainment for Chinese people. One thing becomes an object for the visitors. It is the memorial archway. It brings added brightness into the community. Tourists would like to take a picture of it as a souvenir.

Now Chinatown is getting old as the time flies. It seems like an old man who needs the people to take care of him.

Other creative writing activities include: bringing in quotes from students writings and asking them to expand upon the quote, bringing in an object or a photograph and having students describe it in as careful of detail as possible. I also have asked students to write down and interpret their dreams. Sometimes I would have them work in groups to write dialogues about a situation.

Finally, I have asked students to work with visualizations. The idea of creative visualization warrants some explanation. In the early 1970's a woman named Shakti Gawain wrote a book entitled Creative Visualization. As the author herself states, "In creative visualization, you use your imagination to create a clear image of something you wish to manifest." (p.3). There is a section of the book that talks about leading others in visualization techniques and I thought it would be interesting to try this technique in my class. The basics include: getting participants to focus on each area of their body in sequence and relax that part, culminating in relaxing the mind. After everyone seems visibly relaxed (and hopefully not asleep) then you ask them questions to get them to focus on a specific image. I have used this to get students to imagine their lives five years in the future.

I also used it rather spontaneously one Friday afternoon. The weather had been particularly hellish for a number of days and it had begun to affect everyone's mood, including my own. None of us could focus, so I stopped the class and had students visualize what, for each of them, would be the perfect day. Once they had a clear visual image in their minds' eyes, then I had them write about it. We did not finish the work that we had scheduled that day, but I felt that everyone's spirits had lifted, sometimes the most important bridge to conducting an effective class.

As I write this I hear the collective murmuring of "flake" from my audience! Yes, I do understand that this activity is somewhat to the left of alternative. No, my students were not receptive to this activity in the beginning (I heard one student ask another if I were a Buddhist. "No," the other replied, "I think she's a hippie."... All those Grateful Dead concerts and an alternative lifestyle coming back to haunt me! Oh well!). However, just like many things new, it takes people a while to get used to it. I think that people still feel a little silly doing this exercise, but I also think that they now can see how this activity sharpens their creative sensibility and makes their writing much more clear and vivid.

I realize that this listing of activities may sound somewhat vague. There's a good reason for that. The thing about creative writing in my class is that it is not very set so it is difficult to describe what I did in too much detail. This is the one area of writing that really has been personalized from class to class for me. I would not consider what I did in this area to be structured but rather guided.

In fact, I don't feel that this area of writing was as successful as I would have liked for it to be because there was not enough follow-up on the topics we explored. In the attempt to keep the process spontaneous and therefore not forced, I did not ask for students to hand in their pieces or even work with them any further unless they chose so. In some ways I still stand behind that decision but what I think I would do in the future is ask students to keep their creative pieces in a folder to whatever degree they decide to work with any given piece and then have a one-on-one conference at some point in the cycle. In this conference, I would ask a student to choose the piece(s) they liked best and begin to develop that piece further. In that way I could make this piece more integrated into my class.

A List of Creative Writing Activities - In Brief

* Bringing in an object or a photograph and having students describe it in as careful of detail as possible
* Bringing in quotes from students writings and asking them to expand upon the quote,
* Creative Visualization
* Self-Descriptive Words
* Sentence Starters
* Taking a walk around the neighborhood and writing what you see
* Writing down and interpreting dreams.
* Writing down group dialogues about a situation.

Process Writing for Essays

I realize from the onset that the focus of this style of process writing might seem rather narrow and stifling but in light of the type of writing that students are required to do in this program, I feel that this is the best way to approach essay writing. To address what I feel is the problem with asking students to write in such a formulaic manner, I try to add other types of writing to my curriculum, like dialogue journals and creative writing. I also try to intersperse assigned topics with free topics so that students will, hopefully, have a chance to explore in writing the ideas and subjects which are important to them that I may not have covered in trying to chose topics for the class to address as a whole.

Brainstorming

This is the first step in writing an essay., I have tried to approach brainstorming in a variety of different ways in the class to help students find the way that best suits the individual styles of each of them. Just for a point of clarification, I have not used brainstorming as a way of finding a topic for writing. Instead I have used brainstorming as a way to help students outline an essay once either they or I have chosen a topic.

One way I have approached brainstorming is to have students do a **Mapping Exercise**. First I ask students to identify one word or phrase that best defines the proposed subject of their essay. I ask them to write that word in the middle of a page and put a circle around it. After that I ask them to write words around the subject and attach them to the subject with arrows or lines. For example, if a student were writing about more money being allotted for education, I would have her write "money for education" in the middle of a sheet of paper. Then I might ask her to try to be more specific (i.e. What specifically about money for education is it that you think is important?). Perhaps she might say something like, more money for teachers, more money for books and supplies and more money for better facilities. If you want, you can get more sophisticated with the mapping by asking the students to connect other words or ideas to the subordinate ideas the surround the main idea but in my experience that has gotten too convoluted and confusing (perhaps mostly for me) so I have chosen to keep it simple.

At this point, students can use the ideas from their mapping to construct an essay, using the main ideas to construct an introduction and the branch ideas to form the body paragraphs of the essay. I find this a particularly helpful approach in helping students understand the specific style of writing that is asked of them when they take the Writing Diagnostic Test. It is a clear and simple way to identify the main ideas of an essay which is one of the requirements of that exam.

Mapping for Essays

1. Find one word or phrase that best defines the proposed subject
2. Put that word or phrase in the middle of a piece of paper and put a circle around it.
3. Write words that describe the important parts of the subject
4. Put those words (2 or 3) around the subject, circle them and attach them to the subject.
5. Use the main circle to write an introduction and smaller, surrounding circles to write body paragraphs

Another brainstorming activity is called **Cubing.** The idea for this form of brainstorming comes from Elizabeth Cowan's book Writing. I have not actually made the cubes but I think it would be helpful to have them in front of each student (food for future thought; perhaps after finishing the project at hand!). Basically, when students use cubing they will look at their potential subject as though it were a six-sided cube. The ideas is to write for 3 - 5 minutes for each side of the cube and to keep moving until all sides of the cube are covered. The six sides included: describe it, compare it, associate it, analyze it, apply it and argue for then against it. After finishing the cubing the students should be able to use the information to outline an essay on their chosen subject. The one thing I will say about using this method is that I have found it a little bit more difficult for students to access their ideas than in the mapping exercise. I have found that this works a lot better as an activity after students have a very solid idea about the logistics of essay writing.

Cubing

Describe It
Compare It
Associate It
Analyze It
Apply It
Argue for It then Against It

The final method for brainstorming that I have used is simply free-writing. If students have ideas that they feel like they want to explore in writing but they are not sure of the direction that they want to take that idea, I will ask them to take out a clean sheet of paper (the clean sheet part is not essential except from the point of view that I have found that a clean sheet of paper can be less distracting, helping a student to focus on clarifying their ideas). I usually ask a student to try to write for 10 - 15 solid minutes without stopping. This is one instance where I will ask a student to put away all dictionaries and thesauruses and try to go one on one with their pen (pencil) and paper.

When using this method students are usually able to do one of two things: they can clarify a direction or they can decide that there is not enough information, motivation, whatever to continue with their topic. The problem, of course, then becomes choosing a new direction.

I highly recommend using brainstorming as a precursor to writing, especially in the E.D.P. It really helps students tap into what they want to say, it helps clarify the process of writing an essay and it makes all the writing that is asked of students once they approach the Task section of this program a lot more accessible.

Let me explain one instance of the use of brainstorming in my class. I think this may make it a little more clear about how this works and how to make the transition from the brainstorming activity to the actual writing of the essay. A few months ago we read The Women of Brewster Place, a really beautiful book about the struggles of a black woman to build a life as a single mother, written by Gloria Naylor. In this book, the main character, Mattie, overindulges her son because he is essentially the only person in her life. In short (and rather oversimplified for purposes of

expediency), Basil, her son, turns to a life of crime and there is some implication that Mattie's overindulgence lead to this state. I explain the book here only because it gives the subsequent activity a framework.

Students in the class kept coming back to the idea that Mattie, in their opinion, should not have spoiled Basil and that she was responsible for his downfall in not being more strict with him. So, one day, when students came into class, I had written the idiom "Spare the rod and spoil the child" on the blackboard." I left it there for the first part of class for students to just digest. Then we had a discussion of the idiom and how it applied to The Women of Brewster Place. From that discussion, I asked students the question, "Should Mattie have disciplined Basil more?" I asked students to do a mapping exercise with this question. Students wrote words like "discipline" and "strict parenting" in the middle of their papers. From there I asked them to tell me why discipline or "being strict" was important (i.e. the reasons for the essay) and attach it to the main idea with smaller circles. Students responded with words like "better structure", "more independent adult", and "more productive person".

While students did this work, I circulated and held brief, individual discussions with each student to make sure that they understood the question and had some clear sense of direction. This group of students with whom I conducted this activity had already been through process of writing essays several times, so once I felt that everyone was clear on the topic, I could simply instruct them to begin writing an introduction. If they were less experienced in the area of process writing, I would have used this activity as a "way in" to writing introductions.

Introductions

Introductions are very important in the scheme of essay writing. If a student can write a clear, well defined, well organized introduction then she (he) should be able to write an essay with a lot less struggle. I feel very strongly that a good introduction provides a blueprint to a formal essay, especially the kind of formal essay that is set forth in the E.D.P.

The first time I work with students on writing introductions, I have all students write on the same topic and that topic will usually involve working with some sort of problem and solution (i.e. the educational system, day care in the United States, homelessness, etc.) in which they identify the problem and propose a solution. I have called this writing a critical essay, although someone pointed out to me recently that I may be off in that definition.

For lack of a better word at this point, in critical essay writing, I ask students to identify the problem, propose all possible solutions (this can be done through a brainstorming activity) and then choose what, in their often differing opinions (which I think is great) the best solution is. We talk about the word thesis and then students use their chosen solution to write a thesis (as a direction for students, I explain to them that a solution usually involves a "should" statement, which will have been taught as a grammar point prior to writing introductions).

After writing the thesis statement I ask students to choose what they believe are the best reasons (2-3) to support their thesis and write a sentence or two which introduces these reasons (which will appear again in the body paragraphs). To put these steps together, students will write their introductory paragraph with one sentence to identify the problem or give a brief explanation about what topic they are addressing, one sentence that will serve as a thesis statement and one or two sentence which will clarify what aspect of the thesis they are going to discuss in their body paragraphs. I explain to them that the order of an introduction is not set in stone but that I have found that it works best if an introduction moves from the general to the specific.

To reinforce the skill of writing introductions, the week following our first attempt to write introductions, I will write three thesis statements (I purposely do not mention to the students that what I have given them are thesis statements so that they can come to that conclusion on their own) up on the board that come from current class discussions and ask students to choose one and use it to write an introductory paragraph. I then ask for permission to type their introductions and bring them to class the next day for analysis, asking the following questions:

1. **Can you identify the thesis statement in this introduction?**
2. **Can you identify the supporting arguments for the thesis?**
3. **Is this a good introduction?**
4. **If it is, what makes it a good introduction? If it isn't, what would make it better?**

I ask students to take notes after each example and then copy their notes and give them to each student so that they can each see the different ways that the texts were analyzed. The following is an example for this activity.

In addition, at the end of this section, I have included the worksheets I used to introduce Introductions to students.

Examples of Introductions:

Yesterday each student wrote an introduction using one of the following statements:

* The city of Boston should help solve the problems in Chinatown.

* The Chinese government should release all the students arrested after June 4, 1989.

* The United States government should pay for all immigrants to study English for their first year in the United States.

Please read each paragraph and answer these questions. Write your answers after each paragraph. Please write in pen so that I can copy each persons notes to return to you tomorrow.

1. **Can you identify the thesis statement in this introduction?**
2. **Can you identify the supporting arguments for the thesis?**
3. **Is this a good introduction?**
4. **If it is, what makes it a good introduction? If it isn't, what would make it better?**

I. to give a good impression to the children the home education is most importance, the children will be good or bad it depend on what you did or you action sot he parents should responsibility they are children education.

II. Most immigrants don't have English skill. all of them are eager to study English in the United States. They want to improve their English. They want to get a good job. They want to live here easier. The government should pay them to study English for at least one year. If it is not, they have a lot of problems. Some of them will go to the wrong way. No one wants to see that happen in here.

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III. In China, a sentence describes money: "Money can make ghost to pull the wheel." The meaning said, "Money can do anything." Is that true? There are two situations in the world. Some countries, money can do anything. some countries money can't help people any more. Usually, money is very important for countries or persons.

IV. Living in Quincy, there are no transportation troubles. It is easy to take the T or bus and it is cheap, not expensive. Quincy is a town, there is not too many people and cars so it is very quiet. I have two sisters live there, it is easy to take care each other. I should like to live in Quincy.

V. Smoking is not a good thing because it could be harmful the people's health. If you are smoking in the public place, other people are as smoking as you. Some smoking is not only harm your health, also it is harmful other people. It can cause many diseases. For example, cancer, black lung and cough, something like that. So, I advice the people have better not to smoke for their health.

VI. Mostly the people thinks, they put their children in school accepted education that they will be good and healthy certainly, it's all the teacher's duty. Actually, their children only get some knowledge from the lesson but they couldn't get a life experience. We should do a s model for our children and take care of them let they grow up healthy.

VII. When the problem come with you, you can't impatient. Hurry and hot temper will be easy to make the other problem again. Sometime if you too worry and hasty, you wouldn't know what you should do to solve the problem. So, we should keep calm when we have a problem.

VIII. Newton is a quiet place and the street is clean. All neighbors have a good job. They have a beautiful houses and garden. They are kind. Newton has many good schools. the parents don't worry that the children go to school by theirself. So, I like living in Newton.

IX. Work and study are very important in our living standard. They bring us happiness and avoid evils. At the same time they give a way for us to do something and to reach our goal in the future. We don't will be drive into a vagabond life. I think we should patience and effort in studies and working to make a living better in the later future.

Body Paragraphs

The main paragraphs of an essay are given a much looser framework. At times, although not in all classes, I have constructed grammar lessons based on sentence building (from simple to compound to complex) and then asked students to construct topic sentences in each form from the reasons that students have given in their introductions as supporting evidence to their thesis. I explain that each topic sentence becomes the basis for a paragraph in the body of an essay.

From then, my only instruction is that their paragraph should go on to give an explanation of the topic sentence and then perhaps develop a specific example from their own life or from something they have learned through reading about their essay topic. In terms of the Writing Diagnostic Test, the important thing about body paragraphs is that students must have a clear sense of exactly what evidence they are giving to support their topic sentence since they are asked to identify their evidence when they write their essay for the Boston Public Schools. I have included a worksheet that I used to help guide my students through body paragraph writing at the end of this section.

Conclusions

The culminating part of an essay is not something I have spent a great deal of time on in the class. I have simply viewed this in the class as restating the thesis and giving a brief summary of what they have written about in their essay. The analogy that I have most often made is that an essay can be viewed as a circle and in traveling around the circle, the conclusion not only wraps up an essay but also brings it back to the starting point. That explanation seems to have been very successful in helping students understand the purpose of writing a conclusion.

Evaluations

Evaluations for essays are very informal up to the point of going through the process of writing an essay (which usually happens gradually during the first 4 - 6 weeks of class). In other words, after working on a piece of writing I will ask, "Does anyone want to share what they have written?" Sometimes students do want to share and sometimes they don't. It has always seemed to work best in my class when I try to encourage students to share (when walking around the class during their writing period if a student lets me read his/her writing, I might say something like, "This has a

lot of interesting points in it. Would you mind sharing this with the class?").

However, if no one wants to share, then I have also found it best not to push too much or insist that they share. It can feel sort of risky to let go of that insistence that people share, for fear that no one will ever share, but in taking that leap of faith towards letting go (nails bitten to the quick!), I have found the sharing process evolves of its own accord without my pushing it to happen. When students do read, I try to model ways of responding to their writing and always make sure that students have the space to ask whatever questions they might have about the piece.

After a time with the more informal process of sharing writing, the class begins using Reader Response Circles. Students divide themselves into groups or if they don't want to divide themselves into groups I will put numbers in a hat and students with the same numbers are a group. In a Reader Response Circle, students work with the same group each time that writing is shared for the remainder of a cycle/semester. Students exchange papers with the other members of their group after a rough draft has been written (no one reads their own paper). Students then spend a brief amount of time giving the piece an initial reading and then they take turns reading each others' writing out loud to their group.

They will then respond to the writing based on questions that I have given them as a guideline (I have included a copy of those guidelines at the end of this section). First the author of the piece has a chance to ask questions to the group. Secondly, the group has a chance to ask questions to the author. I encourage the author to take notes during the questioning process (one group called it "the interrogation" and I had images of myself standing over my students with a naked bulb forcing them to answer questions like "What is your deeper purpose in writing this essay?" YIKES!) so that they can integrate any ideas into their second draft. Students continue this process of reading/responding until all participants in the group have had their piece covered. They then use the comments and notes to write an second draft of their essay. While students are participating in the Reader Response Circles, I will generally circulate. Sometimes I will sit in on a group that is having trouble focusing on the process, or sometimes I will just have the luxury of sitting in on an interesting discussion that any one group is conducting. In any event, I am the only person in the classroom that does not belong to a permanent Reader Response Group.

I would like to make a couple of points about Reader Response Circles. The first time I tried this method in my class, I used the "toss them to the

sharks" method. As you can imagine, it didn't work very well and it wasn't a very effective tool. The second time I introduced it to my class I modeled the method. I asked one student if I could use her rough draft and I went through the whole process with the entire class. After that, the Reader Response Circle became a very effective tool.

Secondly, I would like to say that this is a process that requires patience. The first time your students try this method in class they are more than likely to come back with responses like: "There were a couple of mistakes with grammar." or "Everything is good." I think it takes a long time to see writing as a process because it means sticking with a piece of writing through the frustration of getting it to say exactly what you want it to say. It means more work and in the busy life of adults I believe they are not always sure they want to make that investment, are not sure at what cost they are making that investment. My job in this instance becomes one of patient encourager, trying to help students see how worthwhile the investment is. Some students will believe that it is worthwhile and some won't but that doesn't mean stop in my eyes. It just means knowing when to let go and knowing when to persist, that fine attempt at finding the balance of teaching! It's well worth it for those students who figure out that they really can write (all of them can, it's just becomes easier for some to see than others).

The next step in this process happens after the students have written their second draft. I respond to each piece of writing at this point. This is the first time I will have seen any given piece of writing. When I respond to writing done before we implement the ritual of Reader Response Circles, I underline any mechanical errors and write the correction above the error. I never cross out and I purposely never use the dreaded red pen. I realize that there are different schools of thought about correcting students writing but I have thought about this carefully and I have concluded that correction is necessary. Students expect correction as part of your role as the guide, helping them move towards improved writing skills, proper spelling, and grammar. These skills will be expected of them outside of school when they write so why shouldn't it be expected of them within the walls of our learning centers as well? The one thing I did notice about this type of correction is that often I would see the same error that I corrected the week before rear its ugly head in the next piece of writing. It felt frustrating to put so much effort into this kind of response, only to see that it was not integrated into the students' writing.

To accommodate this problem, I adapted a system used in Azar's Understanding and Using English Grammar book. In one of the appendices she has devised a system whereby a number represents a certain type of error. I gave a copy of that page to each of my students (as adapted by Sara Freed and myself; I am, unfortunately, unable to include a copy of that adaptation in this book without violating umpteen copy write laws, but it is on file at C.A.C.A.; please contact me there if you wish to obtain a copy) and then for errors in student writing I use a number system instead of making the correction myself. In this way students become responsible for piecing together the puzzle of their mechanical errors. I do not indiscriminately mark errors but try to focus on recurring errors or errors that have been covered through grammar lessons. I also give students time to study their errors after I return a piece to them and ask each other or me to give them some assistance in figuring out the error.

The people at Boston Public Schools are very stringent about mechanical errors (I once had someone from there tell me that she "was a stickler for the semi-colon.") so it becomes very important for the E.D.P. students to be able to recognize their errors and make their own corrections. I think this is a great tool. Yes, students still make recurring errors, but it happens less often than before I began with this system of correction.

As well as looking at the mechanical aspect of the writing process, I also make notes in the margins, pointing out both the things that are good about the writing and things I feel need to be clarified or explored further. In these comments I always try to include why I am pointing out an area in the hopes that it will give a student some focus if they choose to rewrite their piece further (Once every other month I do actually ask students to take one of their pieces and work with it further.). At the end of the writing I write a summary of the notes that I have written in the margins as a way to reinforce what was written previously.

The process for writing a solid essay takes a long time. In my class we usually write one essay/story every two weeks. At times the process can feel arduous and frustrating for both the students and myself but, as I have said earlier, I stand firmly by my belief that this is the best way I have found to date to approach writing both in terms of what is asked of students by the E.D.P. and in accordance with the learning process for writing. At the end of this section are examples of writing that the students used for their writing diagnostic exam. I think seeing them in their entirety can be helpful as examples. I will let them speak for themselves.

The Writing Diagnostic Test

This standardized test that students must pass in order to enter the second phase of the E.D.P. should not present any major difficulties for students if they go through the process writing cycle a number of times during their stay in the ABE class. For this exam students are asked to write an essay on the subject of their choice so, in the final preparations for this exam, I ask students to go back through their writings and choose one that they would like to use for the test (for my first group of students these are the sample writings at the end of this section) and then I meet with them one on one and help them process through the sorts of things they will be asked to sort through in the exam. I ask them to be able to identify their thesis, their topic sentences and to know what the supporting ideas they have presented are. I realize that this process could be facilitated as a group activity as well as with a one to one conference but I personally have found it helpful to be able to sit down with the student and spend time going through each individual's writing. I also think in some ways that it's reassuring for the students to know that they have had a chance to process their writing in as thorough a way as they feel is necessary. Once we have met one on one (which is usually 2 to 3 weeks before the exam), I tell students to review their writing. I will check in with them a few times before the day of the test to make sure that they feel comfortable and prepared.

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF WRITINGS THAT STUDENTS USED TO SATISFY THE WRITING DIAGNOSTIC REQUIREMENT FOR THE E.D.P.

Immigrant Experience - Bich Dung Luu

Someone once said: "The United States is a children's paradise. It's a middle-aged man's battleground and it's an old man's grave." I agree with the first two statements but I disagree with the last one. The situation is different now. Some things are better than before.

The children in the united States are very lu..cy. The have freedom to get an educatio.. and follow their dreams. In Vietnam, everything is decided by our pare..ts or the government. We don't have a good time when we are children. The children have a beautiful life in the United States.

An immigrant who is a middle aged man must work very hard because he needs to take care of his family. He doesn't know enough English, so it's not easy for him to find a good job. In Vietnam he has his own job and ease (comfort) with language so the U.S. life is a difficult change for him.

Five or ten years ago there weren't many immigrants in the U.S. so the old people were very ad and lonely. The didn't know how to get to Chinatown or find an old friend. Right now you can see many Asian people everywhere. The old people can call some old friend to have some tea together or they can follow their children to travel in China, Hong Kong or Canada. The U.S. isn't an unhappy place or a grave for them now.

I like the United States because I can do anything I like. The school is always open for anyone to study English, skills, etc. The immigrant just tries a little harder to work and to study at first. Then things will get better in the near future.

New Immigrants - Loc Diep

It's very hard for new immigrants to live in the United States. There are a lot of troubles you will face in a new country. All the people should know their rights when living here. I have gotten my green card and citizenship. Through that I learned how to deal with a government.

On my first step in the United States I was very nervous because everything confused me. I knew I would face a lot of trouble living in the United States. I went to the American Immigration Department to apply for my green card. Through this I learned how to fill out an English form. I received my citizenship after I had been living in the United States for five years. Before I received my citizenship I had to study American History to prepare for the exam.

I feel I know so much about my adopted country. I am very pleased to recognize the different government agencies. I have improved a lot of my knowledge while living in the United States. I recognize the American system. I became an American citizen. I feel very comfortable to live in the United States.

My Daily Life - Zhen Su

My daily life is busy and ordinary but it has meaning for me. In the morning, I go to school to study. After school, I have to go to work until 6:00 P.M. Even though I feel tired everyday, I still feel happy and satisfied. I wouldn't trade my life with anyone.

I have two responsibilities during the day: study and work. I usually get up at 7:30 in the morning. I do exercise for 15 minutes and then I eat breakfast. At 8:30 A.M. I begin to go to school to study. I learn English, mat and many kinds of skills. I gain a lot of knowledge in school.

After school I go to work. I have to keep my workplace clean and comfortable. I also have to give good service to my customers. Even though some of them give me a lot of trouble, I have to be patient. I know that's my responsibility. I must do it well.

At 6:00 P.M. it's time to go home. I have finished my study and work. I am relaxed and I smile because I not only study and work hard for myself, but also I do my best to serve this world. Don't you feel that's happiness and satisfaction? I do.

Civil Rights - Jack Kwong

All immigrants want to be able to achieve equal treatment in America. However, they have to face a strange place for living. Sometimes it's difficult to get fair treatment. They will have some problems with their

language and jobs. The government should take care of them but they should take care of themselves too.

There was on unjust event that occurred. In August in New York city's Chinatown, a Chinese worker's association picketed the site of a building. They complained that a construction company didn't hire Chinese workers. At last the company promised to hire a few workers but they must make an agreement with the unions. The fought for equal rights through their actions but I think that wasn't the best way.

Actually, the government should help the immigrants as we continue to help ourselves. For example, the government should support some adult education such as E.S.L programs and E.D.P. programs. It helps them meet the communities requirements. Also the government should support some training programs too. It will improve their job situations.

We should try to get the job that we did in our home countries because we have experience. Perhaps we could find a new job that we learn from a training program. I think it's a good chance to show our work ability to Americans. We must work very hard and honestly. Then we may have a chance to go into the unions.

Although we will get help from the government we need to overcome some difficulties by ourselves. I hope we will have a good life here. We don't want to get any unjust treatment here either. I expect we will have a good future. Certainly we wish the government will support us more.

Chinatown - Jenny Cheung

Chinatown is a Chinese community. Many Chinese people would like to live there for convenience. For some of them, it's not perfect to live there. There are many problems in Chinatown. I think it will be better if people take care of it.

To live in Chinatown is not safe for some people because bad things keep happening here. A few weeks ago, a man was killed on the street during the daytime. The garbage on the streets pollutes the environment of Chinatown. These things scare people who come to eat or visit here. That makes Chinatown depressed.

Some people try to change things but more needs to be done. In March of each year, some Chinese associations try to organize volunteers to clean Chinatown and make it prettier. I think it's not enough. Many people and

the government need to support them. I appeal to the Chinese people to keep their eyes on the development of Chinatown. If people use read activities to answer this appeal, then Chinatown will be cleaner and more safe.

Immigration - Tuk Chiu Wong

Since 1986 my family and I have lived in the United States. We moved from Hong Kong. On the other hand, I want my children to get a good education. So we made a decision to move to the United States.

The people who live in Hong Kong are afraid of losing freedom when China takes over. In China, there are no equitable laws for everybody. What the top leader says is law. They have no opportunity to find a job or get a good education. They are not allowed to move where they would like to live. all of these reasons make the people in Hong Kong afraid of Communism. So, we decided to come to the United States.

In Hong Kong, a lot of students apply for college by few are accepted. I don't want my children to be like me. I had no chance to study in college. In the United States, everybody has an opportunity to go to college. I decided to come here for my children to get a good education.

Now, we have been here more than five years. My children are going to college. My wife has a good job. We don't have to worry about our freedom in the future. We are enjoying our good decision.

Johnny is My Ideal Friend - Philip Lam

Johnny is smart. he has a big pair of eyes that are full of spirit. A bit short and a little overweight, he is still adorable. Johnny became my ideal friend since we studied in high school in China. Whenever I meet any obstacles, Johnny is always on my side through "thick and thin."

I remember that Johnny and I studied in the same class during high school. We helped each other all the time. I also remember that when I failed the entrance examination for the university. Patiently, Johnny encouraged me to try harder next time. Johnny and I have so much in common. We found many things we enjoyed doing together.

An ideal friend is hard to find. But I always consider Johnny is that person. We shared sorrows and joys. We have been through so much together. I don't know if I will ever find a friend like Johnny.

Immigrant Experience - Nam Gip

Immigrants face a lot of problems when they start their life in a new country. There are two common problems they'll meet which I met about a year ago. They are "culture shock" and "language shock". Also, I want to give them some suggestions to solve these problems. Even though life is difficult, it'll get easier after time.

Culture shock is when a newcomer enters a new land. They must change the lifestyle which they used to have in their homeland. They can't adjust to a new land's culture. For that reason, it can cause them to feel culture shock. It causes sadness and homesickness.

Language shock is when a newcomer is afraid of speaking a second language. They need to learn English but at first they make many errors. It take them a long time to work on their new language. It might cause them to feel language shock and it make them feel frustrated and discouraged.

All in all, this is a disadvantage for immigrants. They must find a manner to solve these problems. I have some suggestions for them. When they go to school to learn English, try to speak English with their classmates and out of class try to make friend with English speakers. Then ask them a little bit about their culture and customs. They will be glad to tell you. You might be interested in that.

A Special Friend - Wai Po Mak

My special friend is Ah Ling. She is living in Hong Kong. I met her when I was ten years old. When I have a problem, I will ask her advice. She always has some ideas to give me and she sympathizes with me. So, Ah Ling became my special friend for life.

She is kind and understanding towards me. In 1980 I had a terrible problem with my parents. They wanted to get a divorce in Hong Kong. I had many problems and questions during this time. I decided to move out of the house. I live with Ah Ling. She was very polite to take care of me.

She felt very happy to giver me some ideas and console me. I feel very happy to know her.

This year, I went to Hong Kong to visit my mother and her. She didn't feel that was a burden even though sometimes people change. She still takes care of me. So, I think she is my special friend for life. I will always love her.

WRITING INTRODUCTIONS - A WORKSHEET

When you write an introduction, you will write one or two sentences that explain the problem or the situation. They give the background information. Imagine that the person who will read your essay doesn't know anything about the subject you are introducing and you are explaining the problem/situation to that reader. The first couple of sentences will describe the problem/situation and help the reader understand it. Then the reader is ready for your thesis. Remember, the thesis is the main idea of your essay. It is written in one sentence that is brief but clear and gives your opinion of the subject of your statement. After you write the thesis, you need to write one or two sentences that support your thesis. This is your back-up information that tells your reader what are the reasons that you feel the way that you do about your topic. It also tells the reader what you will write about in the main part of your essay (the body paragraphs).

Describe or explain the problem/situation:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write your thesis statement here:

_____

_____

_____

Now, write one or two reasons that support your thesis:

NOW: PUT IT ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PARAGRAPH. (Remember: when you write a paragraph, you don't write on separate lines for each part of the paragraph. You write all of your sentences, one after the other until you come to the end of the paragraph).

Now you have done it! You've written an introduction. Give yourself a pat on the back!

Summary of Introductions

I. Write one or two sentences that explain the problem or situation.
II. State your thesis.
III. Write two or three reasons that support your thesis. Remember: this is your evidence and it is also a brief outline of what you will write about in your essay.

WRITING THE MAIN PART OF YOUR ESSAY (BODYPARAGRAPHS) - A WORKSHEET

For every reason that you stated in your introduction, you will write a body paragraph. For each paragraph, you begin with a topic sentence which is a restatement of one of your reasons. After you have written your topic sentence, you will continue by giving a brief (1 to 2 sentences) explanation of your topic sentence. This will be followed by a specific example. When you write a specific example, if you can draw from your own personal experience, it will make your writing richer. Finally, you should write 1 sentence that will create a transition to your next paragraph. Think about what you are writing in the paragraph you are working on, what you will be writing in the paragraph to come and what the link is between the two of them. This link is the information you will use to write your transitory sentence. Repeat this process for each of your body paragraphs.

Write your topic sentence here:

Now, write a brief explanation of your topic sentence:

Give a specific example to support your explanation:

Finally, write a transition sentence:

NOW: PUT IT ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PARAGRAPH.

Great job! Now, repeat this process for each of the other reasons that you have stated in your introduction.

Summary of Body Paragraphs

I. **Write a topic sentence which is a restatement of one of the reasons that you stated in your introduction.**
II. **Continue by giving an explanation of your topic.**
III. **Give an example that will support your explanation. Remember, if you give an example from your own life, if will usually make your writing more interesting to your reader.**
IV. **Write a transitional sentence which links the paragraph you are writing to the paragraph that you will write next.**
V. **Repeat this process for each of the reasons in your introduction; when you finish this process you will move on to your conclusion, which will wrap everything together.**

Process Writing in Brief - A Synopsis

* **Begin with a Pre-Writing Activity (a Reading, a Walk, a Discussion, a Word, a Picture, Whatever)**

* **Work with Brainstorming (a List, a Mapping Exercise, etc.)**

* **Give Students time in class to write a Rough Draft. I usually let students write for 20 Minutes to a Half Hour.**

* **Share Writing in class. Usually I will write when the students write. However, I encourage students to share their writing before me (or instead of me). I give time for questions or suggestions on each piece with the only rule being that the responses must be positive and/or constructive.**

* **Students then have a chance to write a Second Draft at home after comments have been made during the sharing period.**

* **The next class period, which is usually after a weekend (I usually give writing assignments on a Friday so that students have plenty of time to reflect and construct) we have Reader Response Circles. Students work in groups they choose and read their pieces to each other. Then they have a chance to ask each other questions or make comments. I don't specify what language they must share in.**

* **After the Response Circles the students write a Final Draft.**

* **The final draft comes to me. This is the first and only time I will make corrections on a piece. My students have asked that I correct their mechanical errors so we made a deal. I use the Error Guide from Azar's Understanding and Using English Grammar as adopted by Sarah Fried and myself. I also will write a paragraph giving my critique of the piece trying to indicate its strong points and areas for possible improvement.**

Questions for Reader Response Circles
Peer Evaluation and Revision

I. The author gives his/her essay or story to another member of the response group who first reads it silently and then reads it out loud to the group. After this the questions begin.

II. First, the author of the essay asks questions to the other people in the response group. Remember to make notes on your essay as you ask questions so that you can include any suggestions in your second draft. Questions might include:

A. What did you like best about this essay/story?
B. Is my essay/story interesting to you? Why?
C. Have I states my main ideas clearly and in a logical order?
D. Do my details support my main idea?
E. Have I included specific examples and reasons to support my details?
F. Have I left out any important ideas?
G. What could I do to make this essay/story even stronger?

III. After the author has asked questions and noted the suggestions of the people in the response group, then the members in the group have a chance to ask any questions they have to the author. These questions might include:

A. Does this story/essay say everything you wanted it to say?
B. What are you trying to communicate to the reader?
C. Why did you choose this topic? Why is it important to you?
D. What is your favorite part of the essay/story?
E. What help or suggestions would you like from this group?
F. What else do you know about this topic?
G. Is all the information necessary? Why?

IV. After both the author and the group members have had a chance to ask all the question they want to ask, the writer of the essay/story should have a few minutes to take notes before going on to the next essay/story. You will go through the same four step process for each person in the group.

READING

Reading Strategy

So far what I have found is that helping students improve their reading level is best facilitated by simply reading: reading books, reading stories, reading newspapers, reading signs on the street, whatever. Of course, readings (in whatever form) are presented in the class in an increasing level of difficulty and as such students have to apply more and more strategies to understanding the texts as the class unfolds. These strategies most often include predicting and working with vocabulary both in terms of developing a self directed list of vocabulary words and finding the meaning of vocabulary words from the context of whatever is being read.

Predicting

Predicting is applied while working with stories in class and also as a way of helping students prepare for the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) Diagnostic Exam. While the students are reading a story or a newspaper article in class, I will often ask them to predict what they think the story will be about based on the title. Other times, I will give students half a story and ask them to write a summary of what they think will happen in the second half of the story. These strategies help students to become more in tune with the story they are reading and give them a connection with the story before they actually do the reading.

The same strategy applies when preparing for the diagnostic exam. There are practice DRP Exams available through the Boston Public Schools. The exam is divided into two columns with the reading appearing on the left hand side and the list of possible answers appearing on the right hand side. I cut off the answer section for a story and ask students to try to predict the answer based on the information in the story. At times they can guess the exact word and in the very least it will help them eliminate some of the wrong answer choices. I reinforce this method by having them try to apply this strategy when they actually do practice exams. This method also

exposes them to trying to find the meaning of different vocabulary words from context.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary used as a reading strategy is a strategy that I feel a little unsure of. I really feel that vocabulary is best understood and reinforced through the context of a story. In fact, the one rule that I enforce in my class is that students are not allowed to use bilingual dictionaries in the class. I do this because I feel that it is important that students understand that in order to improve their reading level they need to start employing English strategies to solving their difficulties in reading. I also feel that this rule urges students to really struggle with the text they are trying to understand.

Using the dictionary for every unknown vocabulary word is a strategy that I have often seen students employ. This method will only give them a micro-understanding of a story and it interferes with the flow of a story which is important for being able to understand any story. Instead, I ask students to read through a story once without the use of a dictionary, circling words they don't understand so that they can come back to them later. Then I ask them to try to see if there are words around the unknown word that will give them clues about the meaning of the word. Only after that do I tell them to go to the dictionary.

The concern that I often hear voiced by students when reading begins to get more difficult is "too many new vocabulary words." I have spent numerous hours trying to encourage students to get a general understanding of a story before they worry about knowing every word but for them it is still important that they have an avenue for understanding the new and difficult words. Somehow reading feels less threatening if there is a place for vocabulary words within the framework of understanding. To facilitate this need expressed by students I give them a pack of index cards where they can record the new words that they find with the word on one side and the meaning on the other. Every few weeks I let students quiz each other on their words. This has made the challenge of reading a lot more comfortable for the students.

As I have said, actually tackling a text is what I feel to be the best method for improving reading level. The methods of predicting and working with vocabulary are the only formalized reading strategies I use in my classroom. Reading is important for many different reasons. It is an important skill for completing the Tasks and it is often a catalyst for writing. In my class we have read many different kinds of stories,

probably too many to list completely. One kind of reading which we do on a regular basis is newspaper reading.

Newspapers

Our class has a subscription to News for You and so each week students are given a copy of News for You to read at home. I like working with this newspaper for several reasons. It gives students exposure to news at a reading level they are comfortable with and it's a nice ritual; every Tuesday, students know they will be given they news and they have always seemed to like it. There is one drawback, however. Since News for You is a weekly, instead of a daily, periodical sometimes the news is not as up to the minute as I would like. At times what would have been a hot topic of conversation if it had been presented in a more timely manner is just more like yesterday's news and people don't seem as enthralled by it.

I try to compensate for this drawback by presenting students with alternatives to News for You. Every morning I record National Public Radio (the announcers have really clear voices and the stories are well informed and intelligent) and if something interesting and appropriate has been broadcast, then I will bring it to class as a listening exercise that is a way in to working with a particular issue (I have tried to focus on raising issues which I think might be helpful for students when they begin to work on their Tasks). I bring in the Boston Globe for students to read (provided I have finished reading it by the time I get to class) and at the end of the week I bring the previous week's Globe to class for students to take home if they want to try to tackle it over the weekend.

Working with the news has been a really good tool in my E.D.P. class. It works to help identify issues which students find interesting and it has also helped to raise student reading level so that the reading that they have to do on both the DRP and the Tasks won't be so overwhelming to them.

Pictures

To begin working with newspaper I try to take a holistic approach to viewing the newspaper. Before even reading a newspaper article in class, I start with pictures, headlines and captions to help students realize what tools exist to help them understand a news article. I begin by bringing in many newspaper pictures from a variety of sources (Globe, Herald, News for You, community newspapers) and putting them on the wall. I encourage people to walk around the room, art gallery style and look at the pictures with the instruction that each person should be able to say at least

one thing about each picture. Then we come back together and talk about the pictures. After we have had a thorough discussion about the pictures from all perspectives (detail, situation, implication), then I divide students into small groups (usually 3 students per group) and have them choose a picture that they will tell a story about. One person per group acts as a scribe and they all work together to tell their stories.

Sometimes it is obvious what news story would be connected to a certain picture and they will give a summary of what they know about the particular story. Sometimes the stories are just made up stories (which at times have been very creative and much more interesting than the real news stories). After students have had time to formulate their stories to their satisfaction, then we come back together as a class and students present their stories.

Headlines

The week after the pictures I bring in pictures again but this time I also bring in captions and headlines which go with the pictures but are separated from them. I have the students divide themselves into pairs and I give each pair a set of pictures and a set of headlines and captions and have them match which picture will go with which headline or caption. We then discuss as a group how we paired things. After that I assign each pair a different picture/headline and ask them to predict what the story would be about based on the information they have. After they talk for a while I then give each group the article and have them read their article to each other (I choose articles which were not too long or difficult so that they are easier to discuss). After that we come back together and each student gives an oral summary of his/her article.

Stories

The third time we work with newspapers we begin to actually work more formally with text comprehension and interpretation. I begin by giving students a dictation of a portion of an article. We then go through the article which the dictation had come from and focus on finding the main idea and answering the news questions (who, what, where, when, why and how). Afterwards, we talk about the idea of a summary and then give an oral summary of the news article (which they had done the week before in their pairs). I bring the titles of the news articles to class with me on index cards and I have each student draw the title of an article for which they would then be responsible for going through the process of finding the main idea and giving an oral summary. For homework they write a

summary of the article they have summarized in class orally. (I have included the worksheet for this activity at the end of this section).

After we have had a chance to go through the paper together as a class, I will continue to give students News for You on a weekly basis but only do formal work with the newspaper every other week. During this time, one student will sign up to be responsible for presenting an article of his/her choice to the class. The other weeks, I simply give people the news and ask if there are any articles (either from News for You or The Globe) that they want to discuss. Sometimes there is nothing they want to discuss and other times things spontaneously erupt!

One day as I came into class, I gave each student a copy of News for You. My intent for the week was that they would just read on their own time but the students immediately saw a picture on the front page of a Vietnamese man being forcefully deported from Hong Kong. There is a serious refugee problem in Hong Kong which all of the students were aware of. The students from Hong Kong and the students from Vietnam took very opposing points of view on what they felt should be done with/for the refugees

Even though that was not our topic for the day, it was certainly a good example of how critical thinking skills could be used and it was something that the students were intrigued by and engaged in so I just sat back and listened. Sometimes the students spoke in English and when their arguments began to take a vehement turn they began arguing in Chinese (loudly and ferociously I might add). I did not stop them from speaking in Chinese but at various points I would ask them to translate for me. That way I could encourage them to try to express themselves in English without imposing a rule.

After I felt that everyone had had a chance to express themselves I stood at the board and wrote the words "problem", "Hong Kong" and "Vietnam" (see attached sheet). Then I asked them to list the different problems from the perspective of both Vietnam and Hong Kong. (In retrospect, I wish I had asked a student to be a scribe instead of taking that role; while we came up with a good list, I think it would have been better if they were trying to explain it through another student instead of me).

After we had listed several points from each side, I asked them two questions:

1. Does Hong Kong have good reasons to want the refugees to leave Hong Kong?

2. Do the Vietnamese refugees have good reason for wanting to leave their country?

Perhaps these two questions are a bit rhetorical and manipulative since the point I was trying to express was that there was no "black or white" in the situation. They answered yes to both questions and we discussed the idea of something not being black and white.

After we had discussed this idea, I asked them to write for 10 minutes about what they thought might be a fair solution that would benefit both parties. Below is a list of their summary from the blackboard activity and the writings that came out of this discussion/listing.

What is the problem?

FOR HONG KONG	FOR VIETNAM
*No money to support the Refugees *Refugees accept lower pay and take jobs away from natives *Hong Kong must follow England's orders *Refugees commit many crimes in Hong Kong	*No fair treatment in camps (like a prison) *No freedom in Vietnam *Bad life situation in Vietnam *No other place for them to go now

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

*Do the Refugees have good reason for wanting to leave Vietnam?
*Does Hong Kong have good reasons for wanting the refugees to leave?
*What does it mean when a situation is not black or white?
*What is a fair solution that would benefit both sides or if you think that this situation is black or white, who is right and why?

RESPONSES:

Wai Po Mak: I think the Hong Kong government should return the refugees back to their country because the United Nations doesn't accept the refugee to go to another country. The refugee try to stay in Hong Kong but some people have to break the legal law in Hong Kong. So the

government wants to send back the refugee in their country. That is cause problem in Hong Kong.

Philip Lam: As matter of fact there is no resource and technique in Vietnam. The people who live in Vietnam figured out that they are embarrassed with no job, food or life. They must move out. That is the reason the Vietnamese refugee creates. I think that the best solution that the United Nations should offer money or technique to held Vietnam build up their own country.

Sue Zhen: The United Nations should have rules for every country to receive the refugees who don't want to go home. By the other way, the United Nations should raise money for Vietnam. That can help the people to go back.

Bich Dung Luu: I think that this is just an idea for the Hong Kong government. If they accept the refugees to live in their country or their camps then they should help them to move to another country, any other country, not Vietnam. How will the Vietnamese government treat them? You know how difficult it is for the refugees to move out of Vietnam? They want to come to a freedom country. If the refugees will be the problem for the Hong Kong government then the Hong Kong government should not have accepted them in the first place.

Loc Diep: It is very hard to say because if the Vietnamese government is not the Communist party then the people will not leave their homeland to be a refugee. So I think we must help them to find a permanent country for living.

Jenny Cheung: I think the Hong Kong government should send them to their own country because the Vietnamese refugees cause problems in Hong Kong. On the other hand, if the U.N. sends them to another country then they will have betters lives than just living in the camps.

Nam Gip: Hong Kong's government should ask the United Nations to have a meeting about sending Vietnamese refugees back to Vietnam. First of all, Hong Kong's government should ask the United Nations commissioner to make a statement that says about sending refugees to Vietnam with the Vietnamese government.

Jack Kwong: It is hard to believe that this is the truth. Could you think about running away from your country and asking somebody to take you back? Now it's a true story occurring in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong

government will force off the Vietnamese back to their country. Although that seems not very fair to the Vietnamese, Hong Kong actually can't accept more refugees from Vietnam and let them remain in Hong Kong without a time limit. It will make a lot of problems for Hong Kong, such as education, housing, medicine, etc.

Worksheet For Newspaper Activity

Writing the Main Idea: Write the main idea of the story in one sentence.

_____

_____

_____

Getting the facts: Answer the questions about the article you are reading. You may not be able to answer all questions but answer as many as you can.

WHO:

_____

_____

_____

WHAT:

_____

_____

_____

WHERE:

_____

_____

_____

WHEN:

WHY:

HOW:

Now, write a summary of the news article you read. Use both the main idea and the facts from the story.

60

TOPIC AREAS

During the first 4 - 5 weeks of a cycle the class has a relatively structured format. We spend time setting class goals and guidelines, getting to know each other, looking at educational issues and exploring family issues. At this point of departure, the students complet polls in which they identify topics of interest to them which they would like to explore further. In this section I have included a list of the materials I used to explore each of the beginning topics and a discussion of how the class unfolded. I have also included a list of some of the subjects that students asked to explore further.

Setting Goals and Guidelines

The first day of the cycle, both classes of students were together. We worked on setting goals. We focused on the words "hopes" and "dreams" and what significance and differences exist between these two words. Then I read a poem that a friend of mine wrote about the difference between the two. After that there was an explanation by the counselor, King Lee, about the difference between long and short term goal setting. When he finished, Sara conducted a visualization where students imagined their lives five years in the future. Remember from the Creative Writing Section of this guide that a group visualization is lead by one person (in this case Sara Freed) who instructs the students about relaxation techniques (while students sit quietly with their eyes closed) during about a five minute period. Students then try to focus on something very specific once they are completely relaxed. In this case, Sara tried to get them to see as many details as they could concerning their lives exactly five years in the future while they were preparing to go to work. What did they see? Where were they getting ready to go? What were they wearing? How did they feel? After they have finished visualizing then Sara gently brought them back to consciousness to discuss what they had seen during their visualization. Homework for that night was to write about what they had visualized.

The next day in class I asked students if they wanted to share what they had written. Some did, some didn't, but I didn't push it because it was the first writing they had done and I knew it could be intimidating to share at first. After we shared we went into discussing class rules. I put the words "HOMEWORK", "LANGUAGE USE" and "ATTENDANCE" on separate pieces of butcher block paper and then divided the class into three groups. Each group was responsible for defining class rules in one of those three areas. After they had set their guidelines, each group presented their standards to the class and we discussed each area as a whole. From their listing, I made a typewritten sheet that I gave to them to keep in their folders. I have included that sheet at the end of this section. The one rule that I do impose in class, which I have discussed before, is that they are not allowed to use bilingual dictionaries in class. However, I do provide English language dictionaries and thesauruses for the class to use during class time. I feel that it has really helped students focus on using English language strategies instead of always translating.

Finally, in order to give students an understanding of what they were preparing for, I had students complete a page of a practice DRP and then write a paragraph on any subject they wanted, identifying the main idea and their supporting reasons. I purposely didn't give them any more specific directions than this. We talked about this activity a little bit but its main purpose was to explain to them that they would be expected to complete these two assignments for the E.D.P. and that we would use reading and writing as a way to prepare them for these tests. I feel that it is good to show students what to expect so that they can understand there is a reason why we ask them to complete the activities we present to them in class. Thus ended the first week.

Getting to Know Each Other

First, I brought in a dictation that I had transcribed from a tape in which I had asked my mother to explain why she decided to name me "Carey Ann" and what the history of my name was. I had them write, compare notes with each other and then ask me any questions they wanted to about my name. This is an example of my philosophy about showing a willingness to talk about myself and my own thoughts and feelings as a precursor to getting students to do the same. As I have said, if you are not willing to share about yourself, then you can't ask students to talk about themselves. I feel that if I show a willingness to reveal information about myself, then

students feel more comfortable doing the same thing. By bringing in a dictation about my name I begin to model that willingness.

After that we read through the story "My Name" by Sandra Cisneros from her book The House on Mango Street. That story is about a little girl named Esperanza, talking about the history of her name and the feelings she has about her name. It uncovers a lot of issues about what a name means to a person. We spent a lot of time in class going through the story and making sure that everybody had at least a basic comprehension of the story. Then we had a discussion about certain issues the story presents. I asked them the following questions:

1. **What does your name mean in you native language?**
2. **In the story, Esperanza says that she wants to change her name. If you could change your name, what would you call yourself and why?**
3. **Sometimes when immigrants come to this country, they choose names for themselves that sound more "English". Why did you choose an American name or if you didn't, what made you decide to keep your native name?**

After we had finished talking about the story and their names, I had students write a story about their own names. They shared them in class the next day. Everybody had some wonderful things to say.

I liked doing this activity as an icebreaker as opposed to having students conduct interviews with each other. For one, I feel it is a little more creative and engaging and for another, I feel the information that students reveal about themselves is a lot more genuine with this activity than the straight-out interview that you will more than likely find at the beginning of every E.S.L. textbook. At this point I felt that the ice had been broken; on to education.

Educational Experiences

We begin with picture of different educational situations. I don't take credit for this idea; I got it from Talking Shop from the UMASS Family Literacy Project. The students were asked to walk around the room for five minutes and then be prepared to say one thing about each picture. After discussing the pictures, students were asked to think in terms of their own educational experiences; just to think, not to write, for 2 minutes.

Then the students talked about some aspect of their own education and then compared their education in the United States to their education in their own country.

In class the next day, we began reading "Antonio's First Day of School" by Rudolfo Anaya. This story describes a boy from an Hispanic community going to school for the first time in an English speaking school. It's a great story for immigrants because it discusses the different feelings that someone might face in going into an educational situation where the language is unfamiliar. After predicting what the story might be about based on the title, I divided students into groups and gave each group a section of the story to read and analyze in their group. After that we came back together as a group and each group gave a summary of their section. For homework that night I gave them the story in its entirety to read.

The next day we discussed the story a little further to make sure that people had a good understanding of what the story was about. Then, we made a list of the different feelings that Antonio had during his first day of school on the blackboard. Students paired up and tried to identify where in the story the different feelings occurred and why he might be feeling like that.

After we had the chance to come at education from a number of different angles, I asked students to choose an experience from their own education, either in the United States or their native countries, and describe that experience and give an idea about how that experience shaped their view of education. We shared those stories the next day in class.

Finally, in this unit we did some language work with certain vocabulary words that students had identified in "Antonio's First Day of School" and used those words to work on finding synonyms in the thesaurus.

I like working with education from this perspective because it gives me the chance to begin to understand what my students feel is important or shaping for them in terms of their education. If I can gain that knowledge from them then I am better able to determine what kind of material or approaches I can bring to class to suit their needs. I also like working with this story because it talks a lot about feelings and it offers students more vocabulary of feeling with which to express themselves.

Finally for this section we worked on a piece from Elsa Auerbach's ESL for Action. She has included a page in her book that poses different situations in which students face difficulty in English class. Students are to decide what are the different possibilities to solve each students problem

and then choose the best solution from the list of possibilities. I then put this on the back burner for future use (see Family Issue - talking about day care).

Family Issues

To begin this unit, we discussed family roles. I wrote the words "generation" and "role" on the blackboard and then I asked a student to take a leadership position at the blackboard and act as a scribe to list the different family members in the generations as other students in the room recalled the English words for the different generations. We then discussed what they perceived to be the different roles for each. I then had the students divide themselves into pairs and gave each pair one of the following family situations:

***A brother and sister talking about a visit from a difficult aunt**
***A parent trying to convince a child to go to college**
***Two sisters trying to decide what to do for their elderly mother**
***A husband and wife talking about a potential son-in-law that they don't approve of**

Each pair had to develop a role play to present to the class based on their situation. For homework that night students read a story called "Four Generations" by Joyce Maynard. This is a really beautiful and touching story about four generations of women in a family, describing both the similarities and the differences between each generation.

The next day we did grammar work with the structure "should" and then applied that to the role plays by deciding what the families "should" do in each of the four situations. We also read and discussed the story "Four Generations." We talked about it pretty informally in terms of how their families were similar to and different from the four generations presented in the story.

For homework that night they were given the first page of an article from Time Magazine called "The Day Care Dilemma". This article is at a very high level (it's the one where students start talking about too many new vocabulary words) so I took a couple of days to go through it. This activity was actually taught this time by Scott Lewis, an intern from the

School of International Training who added some great touches to helping the students understand and engage with the text. To begin with, he pulled out different key sections of the article and having students read through them, asking them to find any connections and decide the order of the pieces of the article. After they had discussed this section of the reading, then he gave them the article and told them to focus on both the roots of the problem and possible solutions to the problem. This was on a Friday and so they had the weekend to tackle the article.

On the following class period, the whole two hours was spent on the article. We read through it slowly and carefully, discussing any concerns or difficulties that students had with the article. As I said, this is a long and somewhat difficult article so this took most of the class. That was fine in my eyes because students need to challenge their reading level by attempting to read more difficult material. My hope is that by allotting plenty of class time and ensuring that students know there is plenty of room for questions, then they won't be so intimidated to read more difficult material in the future. At the end of class, Scott instructed students to read the story one more time the following night and focus on these questions:

1. **Why do most mothers of children work?**
2. **Are there more or less mothers of children working now than in the past?**
3. **What are some of the problems that parents face when considering child care for their children?**
4. **What is one of the main fears parents have about child care?**

Students considered those questions the next day and then used the strategies from the ESL for Action problem posing activity to talk about the problems of child care. We also did work with the structure and use of "because" and applied that to this activity by asking students to look at the solutions they had offered for the child care dilemma and give reasons for their solutions using "because". At this point we used this information to begin the process writing activity that I have outlined in the section called "Process Writing for Essays". Students began working on their own essays.

After the family unit I went through a questioning process with them to decide which topics to begin to cover next. I asked students to list some of the kinds of stories they would like to read and some of the topics they would be interested in. The things that students ask for varies from class to class but the examples I will give of student requests is very representative of my classes.

About the Union System
Art
Biographies
Crime in the U.S.
Economic News
Entertainment in Boston
Jazz Music
Job Search Information
Mystery Stories
Poetry
Public Services in Boston
Romance Stories
The Environment
U.S. Culture
U.S. Government
U.S. History

The strategies that were employed for approaching the topics in the first 4 to 5 weeks of class will continue to be used with the topics above. The first section of the class provides a foundation and a launching point from which the rest of the class can unfold.

Example Of Class Rules

Class Rules - As Defined by the E.D.P. Students; Class I

On Friday, January 17, 1992, the E.D.P. Class made decisions regarding attendance, homework and language use. The following are their decisions:

Attendance:

1. No student can be absent for more than three times in one month without a good excuse (they are sick, their baby is sick, etc.)

2. If someone is absent they must notify the teacher or counselor in advance.

3. If someone is absent for more than three times in one month they will be given probation (a warning). If they are absent any more then they will be asked to leave.

4. People should try really hard to come to class on time.

Language Use

1. Speak English!

2. Speak your native language only when it is necessary to ask a question or try to understand something difficult.

Homework

1. The homework should just take about 2 hours to finish. If someone has a reason they can't finish on time then they should be allowed to finish the next day.

2. If we don't understand the homework then we should be allowed to ask questions about it in class before we finish.

TASK PREPARATION

One way of helping students prepare for the tasks has just been employed this semester. Since it is new and we haven't finished developing it, it feels a little incomplete but I wanted to share it with you because I feel that it is a good process. We have been trying to help students in the first level of the E.D.P. develop a portfolio of materials related to the tasks. In the beginning of class when we did the goal setting workshop, students wrote an essay on goal setting. A few weeks later we invited a personnel recruiter from a local bank to come and teach people about job finding skills. From that the students worked on writing a sample resume and cover letter. Students will be asked to work with these pieces when they complete Task III (Career Exploration). By developing a portfolio of materials that students can take with them, the teacher in the second level class has a way in already developed when the students enter her class. This can hopefully help simplify the enormous job of completing the Tasks.

The other two areas where we thought it would be helpful to develop portfolio materials is for Task IV (Health) and Task V (Government and Society). These are the two other long and more difficult tasks and Sara and I felt it might be helpful to approach them in a cursory way before students begin to work on them for real. We have yet to completely develop these workshops. Perhaps in the next edition!

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